(a) by when the modernization for the Dumdum Airport will commence;

(b) by when the project is expected to be completed; and

(c) how much budgetary allocation has been earmarked for the project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (c) Modernisation work of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport at Kolkata has commenced in November, 2008 at an estimated cost of Rs. 1942.51 crores and the project is expected to be completed by May, 2011.

Difficulties faced by air travellers of NE States

1568. SHRI KHEKIHO ZHIMOMI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that air travellers are facing considerable difficulties in commuting between Delhi and North Eastern (NE) States;

(b) the total amount of subsidy disbursed to various airlines, airline-wise, during the last three years, for operating connecting flights from Kolkata/Guwahati to various cities in the North-Eastern States;

(c) whether the airlines to whom subsidy is being paid are operating required number of flights for the convenience of passengers;

(d) whether there is any proposal to operate daily flights by Indian Airlines from Guwahati to each of the North-Eastern States to mitigate the difficulties of the people;

(e) if so, the time-frame for commencing daily flights; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir. To mitigate difficulties in traveling to/from North Eastern States Alliance Air under an MoU with North East Council (NEC) commenced scheduled operations in the North East Region *w.e.f.* 2.1.2003.

(b) and (c) Alliance Air was granted viability gap funding of Rs. 35 crores for the period 2006, 2007 and Rs. 38.5 crores for the year 2008. Presently, Scheduled Domestic Airlines are operating 304 flights/week to/from North-East region out of which Alliance Air operates 65 weekly services.

(d) The Government has laid down route dispersal guidelines with a view to achieve better regulation of air transport services taking into account the need for air transport services of different regions of the country including North-East region. It is, however, up to the airlines to provide air services to specific places depending upon the traffic demand and commercial viability. As such, the airlines are free to operate anywhere in the country subject to compliance of route dispersal guidelines issued by Government.

(e) and (f) At present, scheduled air services are available from Guwahati to Agartala, Aizwal, Delhi, Dimapur, Dibrugarh, Imphal, Jorhat, Lilabari and Silchar.